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REMARKS BY

**U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA
AMERICA WEEK 2012
DEMOCRACY PARTICIPATION AND REFORM IN
BANGLADESH
TOWN HALL MEETING**

**FEBRUARY 1, 2012
CHITTAGONG**

Good afternoon!

Honorable Mayor of Chittagong Mohammed Manjur Alam

Honorable President of the Chittagong Awami League Mohiuddin Chowdhury

Honorable City Convener of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party Amir Khosru Chowdhury

Honorable Presidium Member and City Convener of the Jatiya Party Md. Solaiman Alam

Seth

Honorable Ameer, Chittagong District, Jamaat-e-Islam Shamsul Islam, MP

Honored Representatives of Democracy International

Honored Guests

No one ever said building democracy is easy. In fact, building democracy is a tough and messy process.

America has been building democracy for over 230 years, and the job is not yet done as we continue to build, rebuild, refine our democracy.

I believe that building democracy is a task that is forever ongoing.

Bangladesh's democracy is new, in some respects just twenty years old.

Like America, Bangladesh is building and refining its democratic institutions.

Like America, Bangladesh is working to engage citizens more in the democratic process and to make the nation's democracy more responsive to the people and their needs and aspirations.

Like America, Bangladesh is endeavoring to bring youth and women into the democratic process. Democracy is strong only to the extent that it represents all of the nation's people. Thus, Bangladesh is wise to expand space for women to participate in the democratic process.

Youth, of course, are the future. Bangladesh is entering a time of generation change. Over 80% of the citizens of Bangladesh were born after the Liberation War; about 65% are under the age of 25. The time is fast approaching for passing the baton to the new generation. The challenge for the youth is to prepare themselves for taking on the added responsibilities of leading Bangladesh's democracy.

I am pleased that America is partnering with Bangladesh to strengthen its emerging democratic institutions. We work with Bangladesh's political parties to help them develop solution-oriented policies and positions that are responsive to citizens' needs. We work with political parties to increase the roles of women and youth, to develop their capacity to conduct effective research to inform their decision-making, and to benefit from best practices from around the world.

Of course, strengthening democracy is about more than the political parties. America is also partnering with Bangladesh to strengthen parliament, the National Election Commission, civil society and the most important layer of governance, local governance ... all of which are key elements of a strong democracy.

My hope is that as Bangladesh's democratic institutions become stronger, the national discourse will increasingly focus on how Bangladesh can become a middle income country over the next 10 to 20 years. I envision a Bangladesh that is the world's largest exporter of readymade garments, the world's largest exporter of household textiles, a major player in information technology, pharmaceutical production, ship building, finished leather goods, and so much more.

Of course, such a Bangladesh cannot emerge until the physical infrastructure is vastly enhanced, rule of law strengthened and an investor friendly climate created.

That is the national discourse that I hope Bangladesh's political process will engage on, so this nation can seize the opportunity of becoming a global economic powerhouse, one that generates a better quality of life for all its citizens.

Thank you

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GR/ 2012